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respond to a feeling for a change in spelling corresponding to a new pronunciation of derivatives of Popular Latin *e*. We may suppose that the stages in our scheme between *ei* and *oe* were compassed in a comparatively brief space of time; when, however, the written *ei* arrived at the pronunciation *oe* the divergence in pronunciation and orthography was so evident that a conscious effort to reconcile the two was made. The result of this attempt was the use in writing of *oi*. The question may naturally arise: Why, in altering the orthography of *ei*, was only the first vowel (*e*) changed (to *o*) and the *i* left? May not the following suggestions account for this? In virtue of its conservative nature, already noticed, orthography when it does change to suit the pronunciation of a given combination often seizes upon the more prominent part of that combination and denotes it, leaving the less marked portion unaltered. Now in the present instance, either because the change (in pronunciation) of the first element *e* (of *ei*) to *o* (of *oe*) was so much greater from a phonetic point of view than that of the second element *i* (of *ei*) to *e* (of *oe*), or because the accent, bearing originally upon the *o*, rendered the enunciation of the unstressed *e* (of *oe*) indistinct, only the *e* (of *ei*) was altered in spelling, the *i* being left intact; hence the result, *oi*.

Although important changes in pronunciation have affected our combination since it has passed the *oe*-stage, the use of *oi* to indicate whatsoever degree of change has never been interfered with (except sporadically by grammarians); *oi* remained in the sixteenth century when the pronunciation was *wɛ*; and we continue to write it notwithstanding our present pronunciation, *wa*, and it was only at a recent date that *ai* was substituted for it in words in which *oi* had had the value of simple *ɛ* (as; *Français*) for three centuries. Such a state of orthography may be partly due to the fact that the French in becoming a fixed literary medium, clung the more tenaciously to traditional script; it may be due partly also to the coincidence that this *oi* < *ɛ* once written, appealed immediately to the eye as belonging to the very numerous class of words in which *oi* was etymological (originating for the most

part in *ɔ*+a palatal and *au*+a palatal, as *miroir*, *joie*); all three of these *oi*'s had the same development in pronunciation, and the etymological foundation for the orthography of the latter two, if it did not help to fashion *oi* to denote the pronunciation of *oe* < *ei*, (supposition by no means impossible), may at least be adduced as favoring the retention of *oi* after the latter had once made its appearance.

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FRENCH LITERATURE.

Athalie by Racine, with a Biography, Biblical References and Explanatory Notes in English by C. FONTAINE, B.L., L.D., New York: W. R. Jenkins. Boston: C. Shoenhof. 8vo, pp. iii, III. 25 cts.

Racine's Athalie, edited with an Introduction, containing a Treatise on Versification, and with Notes by C. A. EGGERT, Ph. D., Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 8vo, pp. xxvi, 130. 30 cts.

THE publication in the same year of two separate editions of Racine's famous tragedy naturally invites of itself a comparison between the two, and at first sight would seem to make the task of the reviewer an easy one. On closer inspection, however, the books before us reveal entirely different conceptions in their respective authors of the object and purpose of their work, and thereby demand another method of analysis from the one suggested by their titles.

Mr. Fontaine has had in mind a text for class translation, and rapid translation at that. Accordingly, after a short sketch of his author and a list of the proper names in the play, with their corresponding English equivalents, and biblical references (in all barely five pages of print), he comes at once to the play itself. On the way, the list of characters is annotated with the names of the actors who took part in the first three representations.

The notes following the text are evidently the result of class room work. They clearly reproduce what the editor's experience has shown him to be necessary to a quick rendering of the original. For they are, with few

exceptions, detailed translations. How far such methods of editing should go, whether they should encroach on the ground of the lexicon and grammar, is perhaps still a matter under discussion. Yet we think that the majority of instructors believe that there is greater danger in assisting the student too much, in annotating our modern texts, than too little. One objection to Mr. Fontaine's use of the method is that he has occasionally allowed himself to give his own meaning to Racine's words. He translates *téméraire* once by "common, vulgar" (p. 24, l. 19), and in other passages he rather obscures the interpretation of his author by renderings which are either vague or are badly proof-read. Such instances may be found on p. 26, l. 26; p. 28, l. 9; p. 31, l. 7; p. 43, l. 13; p. 57, l. 11; p. 83, l. 8.

Occasionally the editor gives a note on the versification, or he comments on Racine's use of words. In the latter case his statements are not always felicitous, as in the example of *déplaisirs* (p. 16, l. 6), which has here its customary seventeenth century meaning, or in regard to the gender of *amour* (p. 17, l. 28), masculine as well as feminine with Racine.

Perhaps the chief drawback of this edition—allowing the editor his view of what an edition of a classical tragedy should be—is in the printing of the text. The lines are not numbered at all, either consecutively or by page, nor are the acts and scenes indicated in the head lines of the right-hand pages. Such omissions—omission of essentials we think—make reference to the different parts of the play wearily difficult, and offer numerous stumbling-blocks to the feet of the editor himself. On the first page, for instance, the name of the speaker is evidently counted for a line in the note references, while on the second it is not. Elsewhere half-lines seem to be reckoned as whole ones. Such inconveniences to quick handling should be remedied in a second edition.

Prof. Eggert has entered upon the preparation of his edition in a somewhat more comprehensive spirit. Instead of furnishing his pupils with a text for rapid reading, he has

aimed particularly at presenting to them a piece of literature, one of the best in the history of the French drama. His work as an editor is to call attention to those characteristics of *Athalie* which have given it its reputation. The mere translation of the play into English is, therefore, a secondary and incidental matter with him. For this reason he recapitulates in his Introduction the leading events of Racine's career, and insists on the significance of his two religious tragedies. After this historical prelude comes a careful study of French classical versification, based on the lines of the play itself. Some eleven pages are thus devoted, which dispose of the subject with the same clearness and thoroughness that Matzke has shown in his chapter on the versification of the romantic school, contained in his edition of *Hernani*. Instructors in French literature are certainly under obligations to these two editors for their adequate presentation of a not very alluring theme.

After the Introduction comes Racine's preface to *Athalie*, which treats of its sources and the suggestions furnished him by the Scriptures. The text follows next, the lines being numbered consecutively throughout the whole tragedy. The notes of the editor are in the main historical and literary. Considerable attention is paid to the language of the author, in those passages where it differs from the usages of the present day. Also the devices of the poet in adapting his vocabulary to the demands of his verse are repeatedly noticed. Among other interesting matter adduced to throw light on Racine's literary procedures are quotations from his favorite writers of Roman antiquity, where such quotations have an evident bearing on the thought and style of the play. The Latinisms allowed by the purists of the time are also pointed out. Translations are given wherever required, and syntactical constructions are commented upon or construed, as the case demands.

Indeed in all respects, this edition of *Athalie* meets the requirements of that literary study which should be especially bestowed on the masterpieces of the French drama. It is the most complete in its equipment of any of the editions of classical tragedy published in this country, and should serve as a model and

standard for future editors in the same field.

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FRENCH EPICS.

Die Französische Heldensage. Akademische Antrittsvorlesung gehalten am 25. Januar, 1894, von Dr. CARL VORETZSCH, ausserordentlichem Professor der romanischen Philologie an der Universität Tübingen. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1894. 8vo, pp. 32.

THE above essay presents to the reader a very clear and succinct summing up of the present state of scholarly research into that vast and entertaining field of mediæval literature which is fitly designated as the French Epic. Though most of the facts here set forth and many of the views advanced are the common property of Romance scholars, this short pamphlet will well repay a perusal, because of the neat and careful manner in which the chief problems that are encountered by the literary investigator, and the necessary limitations to his investigations in this domain, are set forth.

It will, perhaps, not be out of place to call to mind a few of the facts to which Prof. Voretzsch has especially directed our attention. One of the earliest and most celebrated workers in this field was the German poet Ludwig Uhland, who as far back as the year 1812 published a monograph entitled *Ueber das alt-französische Epos*.¹ His co-worker Immanuel Bekker led the way in the publication of texts by his edition of the Provençal epic of *Fierabras*.² Prof. Voretzsch then draws a parallel between German and French epic tradition, and finds that the former has mainly been studied from the point of view of the propagation of legendary recitals, whilst the latter has been investigated chiefly as a special category of literary production. This difference in treatment he considers to be easily explain-

¹ First published in *Die Musen*, Eine norddeutsche Zeitschrift, herausgegeben von Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouquid und Wilhelm Neumann, vol. iii, pp. 59-101, and vol. iv, pp. 101-155. In 1860 it was reprinted in: *Uhlands Schriften zur Gesch. der Dichtung und Sage*, herausgegeben von Ad. Keller und Wilh. Holland, vol. iv, pp. 326-406.

² *Der Roman von Fierabras, Provenzalisch.* Herausg. von Immanuel Bekker, Berlin, 1829. 4to.

able by the difference in the two traditions themselves: the development of the German epic is shrouded in mystery and has its chief interest as a mixture of myth and history, whereas the French epic has arisen within historic times and presents to us all phases of epic literature in great abundance. Furthermore, we find that the German epic is of heathen origin, the French of Christian; the German epic has a great central point in the *Nibelungenlied*, the French is practically without such, for its tradition does not centre in the *Chanson de Roland* in a degree at all comparable to that which exists in the case of the German poem. Finally, as embodying a general truth with regard to the French Epic, the statement may be made that it is the history of the nation in its heroic period embellished by tradition and poetical inspiration.

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MIRACLE PLAYS.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—So far as I have noticed, the historians of the drama do not find positive proof of the presentation of miracle plays earlier than the thirteenth century. Ebert, for example, in his *Studien zur Geschichte des Mittelalterlichen Dramas*¹ calls a reference to the *repraesentatio passionis et mortis Christi*, in 1244 "die älteste Nachricht von dem geistlichen Schauspiele der Italiener." Some time since in reading Bishop Liutprand's narrative of his embassy to Constantinople in 968, I came across a passage which seemed clearly to prove that miracle plays existed in Constantinople in the tenth century. As the histories of dramatic literature which I have consulted make no reference to the matter, it seemed worth while to call attention to the passage in question² which reads as follows:

Decimotertio (i. e. Calendas Augusti [July 20]) autem, quo die leues Graeci raptionem Heliae prophetae ad caelos ludis scenicis celebrant.

¹ *Jahrb. für roman u. Eng. Lit.*, Bd. v, s. 51.

² Liutprandi Legatio, 31 *Mon. Germ. Hist.* SS. iii, 353-4.